

Small Business Advocacy Council Meeting

Thursday, December 15, 2005

9:00 AM

Rhode Island State House

Meeting Minutes

I. Lieutenant Governor Charles J. Fogarty, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. In attendance were:

II. In Attendance were:

Lieutenant Governor Charles J. Fogarty, Chair

Jerry Meyer, East Greenwich Chamber of Commerce

Philip Papoojian, Mereco

Ed Greene, Sage Business Consultants

Phil Papoojian, MERECO

Bob Lafond, North Central RI Chamber

Jim Hurton, Narragansett Chamber of Commerce

Curtis Spence, Claymar Enterprise

Moe Paradis

Justin Aina, Urban Ventures

Darlene Evans, South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce

Ed Ladacouer, Stormtight

Louis Soares, RI EDC

III. Approval of November 18 , 2005 Meeting Minutes

The Chairman called for the approval of the previous meeting minutes. A motion was made and seconded for the approval of the amended minutes.

IV. Comments from the Chair

Chairman Fogarty welcomed the members and wished them a Happy Holiday. He apologized for the fact that Professor Len Lardaro could not make the meeting. He said the he hoped he could have Professor Lardaro speak at the first meeting of the year. Chairman Fogarty said he was pleased to have Scott Wolf in his place to talk about GrowSmart Rhode Island and how smart growth is smart economic development. Chairman Fogarty said that he thought it was a good idea to have GrowSmart come in to discuss ways that they can work with the SBAC during the upcoming legislative session. Chairman Fogarty received positive feedback from Representative Dennigan after her presentation last month to the Council. Chairman Fogarty said that he hopes that the Council can put together a small business issues agenda to put forth in front of the Joint Committee on Economic Development. He said that his office would be setting up a workgroup meeting after the first of the year. Chairman Fogarty said

that the high cost of healthcare continues to be the number one concern he hears from small businesses. In order to address this issue he is looking for the Council to support the concept of a re-insurance pool in Rhode Island, similar to New York State. He said that the next SBAC meeting is scheduled for January 27 at Urban Ventures located at 150 Colfax Street in Providence. He would like to have Professor Lardaro at the January meeting.

V. Smart Growth is Smart Economic Development

Scott Wolf, Executive Director, GrowSmart RI

Scott Wolf briefed the Council on Grow Smart's activities and their priorities for 2006. He said that he looks forward to working with the SBAC during the upcoming legislative session. For more information on Scott's presentation please see attachment 1.

VI. RI EDC Update

Louis Soares, RI EDC

Louis Soares briefed the Council on the most recent Every Company Counts program operations scoreboard. The scoreboard tracks the effectiveness of referrals in the ECC network (see attachment 2). Louis said that the EDC was receiving \$1 million to \$1.3 million dollars for human resource development job grants. He said that the Regflex initiative is moving forward and he is planning a seminar to discuss best practices with the Regflex process in other states. He also said they are looking into a rating scale for agencies in compliance with the program. He said that the ECC web-site will be customized next year to take referrals online. He said that ECC will send a customized referral sheet to the ECC partner directly. ECC is also looking to do relevant business development workshops. One issue ECC is exploring for a seminar is merchant competitiveness with downtown businesses and best practices on permitting and licensing.

VII. Discussion on Resolution in Support of a Sales Tax Holiday in Rhode Island

Lieutenant Governor Charles Fogarty, Chairman

Chairman Fogarty read the resolution (see attachment 3). A motion was made and seconded by Jerry Meyer. The resolution was adopted unanimously. Phil Papoosian said that he would ask the SBANE government affairs committee to support the idea of a sales tax holiday at their next meeting. Chairman Fogarty said that he thought Rep. Joe McNamara would be introducing sales tax holiday

legislation similar to last year.

IX. SBAC Member Updates

An opportunity for members to brief the council on issues, programs and projects

Darlene Evans said that the South Kingstown Chamber of Commerce is already in the process of planning the 2006 Southern Rhode Island Business Expo at the Ryan Center at URI. Phil Papoosian said that at 7:30 AM next Tuesday at Mereco in West Warwick the SBANE government affairs committee would be meeting and that SBAC members are welcome to join them. Ed Ladoucer expressed his concern with the Contractors Registration Board. He said that the Board is not appropriately funded and staffed for its mission. The mission is to guard the consumer against unscrupulous actions from contractors. Ed said revenue is generated from fees levied on contractors and monies need to be allocated to help the board function properly. He said that the board needs the appropriate funding and staff to properly carry out its mission. Justin Aina said that he is excited for the first SBAC meeting of the year to be held at Urban Ventures at the end of January.

Chairman Fogarty wished everyone a happy holiday season and said he looks forward to a productive 2006. Chairman Fogarty requested a motion for adjournment, which was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.